

Message Text

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ACTION EA-12

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 SEOUL 1343

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: KS, PINS
SUBJECT: CAMPUS SITUATION FOR SPRING SEMESTER

SUMMARY: UNIVERSITY REGISTRATION BEGINS FINAL WEEK IN

FEBRUARY WITH CLASSES SCHEDULED TO BEGIN FIRST WEEK IN MARCH. RECENT MOVES BY ROKG HAVE STRENGTHENED ITS POSITION FOR DEALING WITH ANTICIPATED CAMPUS DISTURBANCES IN THE SPRING SEMESTER. AT THE SAME TIME, STUDENTS APPEAR PREPARED TO USE THIS ELECTION YEAR TO FLEX THEIR MUSCLES ONCE AGAIN AND CHALLENGE THE GOVERNMENT ON LOCAL CAMPUS GRIEVANCES AND/OR LARGER ISSUES OF GOVERNMENT CONTROL AND OPPOSITION TO THE POLITICAL SYSTEM. THE STAGE IS THUS SET FOR RENEWED CONFRONTATION BETWEEN STUDENTS AND GOVERNMENT. THE ABILITY OF THE GOVERNMENT TO DEAL WITH DEMONSTRATIONS ONCE THEY OCCUR IS GREATER THAN LAST FALL, BUT ITS ABILITY TO PREVENT DEMONSTRATIONS FROM OCCURRING IS DOUBTFUL. END SUMMARY.

1. ON JANUARY 31 ROKG CABINET AMENDED THE IMPLEMENTATION DECREE FOR APOINTMENT OF EDUCATION OFFICIALS. UNDER TERMS OF REVISED DECREE, MINISTER OF EDUCATION HAS GAINED ADDITIONAL AUTHORITY TO DISMISS PRESIDENTS AND VICE-PRESIDENTS FROM THE NATIONAL UNIVERSITY SYSTEM AND TO
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CONTROL PROMOTION OF PROFESSORS. ROKG HAS EMPHASIZED SCHOOL OFFICIALS AND PROFESSORS SHARE IN THE RESPONSIBILITY FOR ENSURING CAMPUS STABILITY.

2. ON FEBRUARY 2, PRESIDENT PARK ISSUED A PARTICULARLY STRONGLY WORDED STATEMENT WHICH MADE CLEAR THE GOVERNMENT WOULD NOT TOLERATE CAMPUS UNREST THIS SPRING.

HE NOTED 1978 IS ELECTION YEAR IN ROK, AND IN PAST ELECTION YEARS, "SMALL GROUPS OF INDISCREET COLLEGIANS, INSTIGATED BY IMPURE ELEMENTS FROM OUTSIDE, HAVE EITHER GONE WILD OR DISRUPTED CAMPUSES, THUS CAUSING TROUBLE". PRESIDENT ORDERED SCHOOL AUTHORITIES TO MAKE ADVANCE PREPARATIONS ("GUIDE" STUDENTS) TO ENSURE NO CAMPUS DISTURBANCES OCCUR, AND APPARENTLY SCHOOLS ARE DOING SO. IN FEBRUARY 11 MEETING WITH UNIVERSITY OFFICIALS, PRIME MINISTER AND MINISTER OF EDUCATION REITERATED GOVERNMENT WARNING THAT "STERN MEASURES WILL BE TAKEN TO MAINTAIN ORDER ON THE CAMPUSES" AND AUTHORITIES WILL BE MONITORING THE ACTIVITIES OF A "HANDFUL" OF TROUBLESOME STUDENTS.

3. MINISTER OF EDUCATION HAS REPORTEDLY ALREADY BEEN TO SNU CAMPUS TO URGE ADMINISTRATORS AND PROFESSORS TO CONTROL STUDENTS. HE IS SAID TO HAVE TOLD THEM THIS WOULD BE HIS LAST VISIT TO THE CAMPUS, AND IF THE ADMINISTRATORS AND PROFESSORS FAILED TO MAINTAIN CALM AT SNU, HE WOULD NOT HESITATE TO FIRE THEM. AFTER SUCCESSIVE DEMONSTRATIONS LAST FALL, ROKG THREATENED TO CLOSE SNU AND SOGANG CAMPUSES FOR PERIODS OF UP TO ONE YEAR. SOGANG'S PRESIDENT SKILLINGSTAD BELIEVES THREAT IS STILL IN EFFECT AND CLOSURE IS POSSIBLE IF MANY DEMONSTRATIONS BREAK OUT. HOWEVER, CAMPUS CLOSURE WOULD APPEAR TO BE MORE THREAT THAN ACTUAL PLAN. COSTS OF SCHOOL

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CLOSURE ARE PARTICULARLY HIGH IN THE CASE OF PRIVATE SCHOOLS, AND LENGTHY CLOSURE WOULD BE VERY HARMFUL FOR UNIVERSITY OFFICIALS, FACULTY, AND STUDENTS. FURTHER, SCHOOL CLOSINGS WOULD BE PUBLIC ADMISSION GOVERNMENT HAD FAILED IN ITS PLAN TO PREVENT DISORDER AND HAD BEEN UNABLE TO CONTROL CAMPUSES. TEMPORARY SUSPENSION OF CLASSES AT SELECTED CAMPUSES IS A REAL POSSIBILITY, BUT WIDESPREAD SCHOOL CLOSURES SHOULD BE VIEWED A MEASURE OF LAST RESORT.

4. INCREASED POLICE SURVEILLANCE AND MONITORING OF POTENTIAL STUDENT DEMONSTRATIONS IS PLANNED. THE INCREASED PRESENCE OF MORE POLICE AND INFORMANTS ON CAMPUSES, ALREADY AN IRRITANT TO STUDENTS, MAY NOT SIGNIFICANTLY SERVE THE GOVERNMENT'S PURPOSES. IT WAS SEEN IN FALL 1977 DISORDERS THAT POLICE INTELLIGENCE WAS NOT AS EFFECTIVE AS PREVIOUSLY HAD BEEN THOUGHT. WITH PRESSURE BEING APPLIED TO PROFESSORS AND ADMINISTRATORS TO MONITOR STUDENTS, IT IS ASSUMED THAT STUDENTS WILL SIMPLY BECOME MORE CLANDESTINE IN MEETINGS AND AVOID CONFIDING IN THEIR MENTORS.

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5. MINISTER OF EDUCATION PRIVATELY TOLD DRP ASSEMBLYMAN PARK CHAN-JONG THAT A STRONG PUBLIC STANCE BY GOVERNMENT IS REQUIRED TO DISCOURAGE STUDENT DEMONSTRATIONS. HOWEVER, IF AND WHEN DEMONSTRATIONS OCCUR, MINISTER DOES NOT PLAN TO RESPOND WITH FULL WEIGHT OF GOVERNMENT POWER. ASSEMBLYMAN PARK INFORMED EMBOFF THAT MINISTER INTENDS TO PROCEED WITH RESTRAINT IN ORDER TO PREVENT CONFRONTATIONAL SITUATIONS FROM ESCALATING INTO MAJOR DISTURBANCES.

6. THREE MEN IN ROKG WILL PLAY PRINCIPAL ROLES IN HANDLING STUDENTS - KCIA DIRECTOR KIM CHAE-KYU, HOME MINISTER KIM CHI-YOL, AND MINISTER OF EDUCATION PAK CHAN-HYON. KIM CHAE-KYU APPEARS MOST FLEXIBLE OF THE THREE, WHILE KIM CHI-YOL IS SEEN AS MOST RIGID AND PRONE TO USE FORCE BOTH AS A PREEMPTIVE MEASURE AND AS REACTION TO CHALLENGE. PAK CHAN-HYON (RECENTLY APPOINTED TO HIS POSITION) FEELS CAUGHT IN A PRECARIOUS SITUATION WHERE HIS PERSONAL AMBITIONS FOR CONTINUED AND HIGHER GOVERNMENT POSITIONS WILL BE THWARTED IF STUDENTS GET OUT OF HAND. PAK MAY LACK THE ABILITY TO SUCCESSFULLY HANDLE SITUATIONS REQUIRING FLEXIBILITY, SKILL AND EXPERIENCE.

7. THE MOST ELUSIVE FACTOR IN THE EQUATION IS THE ATTITUDE OF STUDENTS. THEY RISK THE MOST IN ANY CONFRONTATION
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WITH GOVERNMENT AND BEFORE THEY TAKE THAT RISK, THEIR FEELINGS OF GRIEVANCE WOULD HAVE TO BE HIGH. ROKG MAY ATTEMPT TO DEFUSE ONE OF STUDENT'S BIGGER COMPLAINTS BY ALLOWING STUDENTS TO NOMINATE LEADERS FOR THE ALL-ENCOMPASSING STUDENT DEFENSE CORPS. HOWEVER, IF STUDENT NOMINATIONS WERE THEN SUBJECT TO GOVERNMENT APPROVAL BEFORE APPOINTMENT, THIS TACTIC WOULD PROBABLY BE TOO TRANSPARENT TO FOOL THE STUDENTS FOR LONG.

8. ROKG PRESSURE OF LATE HAS RAISED THE ANTE, BUT NOT YET TO THE LEVEL WHERE STUDENTS CONSIDER THEMSELVES OUT OF THE GAME. DEMONSTRATIONS ARE EXPECTED BY ALL OBSERVERS, AND POSSIBILITY OF LARGE-SCALE DISRUPTIONS CANNOT BE RULED OUT. TO DEMAND, AS ROKG HAS RECENTLY DONE, THAT STUDENTS BE QUIESCENT FOR ENTIRE SPRING TERM, IS ASKING TOO MUCH. THE TRADITION OF KOREAN STUDENT ACTIVISM AND OPPOSITION CANNOT BE TURNED OFF SO READILY. WE LOOK FOR DEMONSTRATIONS IN MONTHS TO COME, BUT FEEL ON BALANCE THAT ROKG WILL BE ABLE TO CONTAIN THEM.

9. ITEMS BROUGHT UP DURING THE SPECIAL ASSEMBLY SESSION COULD PROVIDE STUDENTS WITH FUEL FOR CAMPUS DISORDERS. FOR EXAMPLE, IF THE OPPOSITION WERE SUCCESSFUL IN RAISING THE ISSUE OF REVISING THE NCU PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION SYSTEM, STUDENTS COULD LIKELY PICK UP THIS THEME AND ONCE AGAIN CALL FOR CHANGES IN THE YUSIN SYSTEM. DISSIDENTS, SOME FACTIONS WITHIN THE NDP, AND MINOR POLITICAL PARTIES WILL TRY TO TAKE ADVANTAGE OF STUDENT DISORDERS--AS A MINIMUM TO WRING CONCESSIONS FROM THE GOVERNMENT OR, MORE BORADLY, TO POINT OUT LACK OF SUPPORT FOR THE PRESENT REGIME. THESE GROUPS ARE LIKELY TO ISSUE STATEMENTS EXPRESSING SOLIDARITY OR SUPPORT FOR SUCH DEMONSTRATIONS AS OCCUR AND CHAMPIONING THE CAUSE OF STUDENTS WHO MAY

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BE DETAINED BY THE POLICE. HOWEVER, THE ROKG'S ABILITY TO CONTROL DISSEMINATION OF DISSIDENT VIEWS IN THE MEDIA IS LIKELY TO LIMIT THE AMOUNT OF POLITICAL CAPITAL OPPOSITION POLITICIANS AND DISSIDENTS CAN MAKE FROM THE EFFORTS OF STUDENTS.

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